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NATIONBUILDING IN EURASIA

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Seemingly, fifteen new states were established in Eurasia in 1991 after the demise of Communism in the Soviet Union. However, a 'state' in the full sense of the word does not come about simply by a political proclamation of independence, still not by international recognition. A true state must have control of its own frontiers, a monopoly of coercive powers on its territory, be able to collect tolls and taxes, etc. To carry out these tasks a modicum of administrative apparatus is needed, as well as a broad consensus in society of the rules and routines for how the jobs shall be done.

In the fall of 1991 these preconditions were generally not fulfilled in any of the Soviet successor states. The armed forces on their territories and the levers of economic policy were beyond the control of the new state authorities. There also were no border defence systems between the new states, indeed, state borders were not even delineated in the terrain.

For these reasons it is more appropriate to say that on New Year's Day 1992 the *groundwork* for the building of fifteen new states in Eurasia were laid. The establishment of governmental institutions and other state attributes is a prolonged process which will continue for decades. In this article, however, I will leave aside the economic and institutional aspects of of this process and instead focus on some crucial political and cultural issues, 'nation-building' in the strict sense of the word as distinct from 'state-building'. In order to keep a state together in the modern world, it is essential that its population have a common identity and a shared feeling of common destiny. The citizens must be bound together by loyalty towards the same institutions, symbols and values. This does not necessarily imply that all inhabitants of the state must partake in the same ethnic identity. National identity may, and in many cases must, be political rather than cultural.

The USSR prided itself of being a 'multinational state', indeed, some hundred different ethnic groups were registered as living on its territory. In contrast, with one exception, all of the successor states, have been proclaimed as 'national states' or 'nation-states'.[1] This basic concept can have (at least) two very different meanings. In the West, the dominant understanding is that of a political and civic entity, in which the nation is delineated on the basis of common territory, common government and to some extent common political history. There exists, however, a rival concept of a nation as a cultural entity, based on common language, traditions, mores, religion, etc. in short: an *ethnic* nation. This concept has deep roots in Russia, for several reasons. In Western Europe the driving force behind the creation of consolidated nation-states was primarily the bourgeoisie, but in Russia this social group was numerically weak and without political clout. The dynastic, imperial state, in which the attempts of conscious nation-building were few and ham-fisted, was able to hold the ground

[1] The exception is Russia, which will be left out of this survey. Nation-building in Russia certainly deserves, and receives, serious attention, but reasons of space and also some principal reasons have dictated its exclusion from this article. Russia is not only a Soviet successor state but also the remnants of the former centre. The preconditions for nation-building are therefore radically different. For a useful introduction to Russian nation-building see Valerii Tishkov, 'Nationalities and conflicting ethnicity in post-Communist Russia, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, DP 50, March 1994.

much longer. Under such conditions the various language groups developed into strong national identities.[2]

These age-long experiences of the tsar's subjects were reinforced in the Soviet period. The idea behind the Soviet federation was to mollify all major ethnic groups by giving them the trappings of their own statehood. These groups became the *titular nationalities* of the various Union republics: The Ukraine Soviet Republic was named after the ethnic Ukraines, the Turkmen SSR after the Turkmen tribes, etc. Within their 'own' territory the titular nationalities were given certain special cultural rights, particularly as regards educational opportunities and language policy.[3] At the same time Soviet authorities did nothing to create ethnically pure Union republics in the demographic sense. The many ethnic groups had for centuries been living strongly intermingled with each other, and considerable interrepublican migration further complicated the ethnic map.

This is the dual legacy which the new states of Eurasia have to come to grips with when they today embark upon their various nation-building projects: on the one hand, an exclusionary nation concept which equates the nation with the ethnic group. On the other hand, a medley of disparate ethnic groups on the state territory. With the partial exception of Armenia, the non-titular population everywhere make up considerable minorities, in some cases close to half of the total. (see table)

After four years of post-Soviet nation-building certain patterns are emerging. Almost everywhere the titular nation has been placed in the centre of the project and given certain prerogatives, implicitly or explicitly. For instance, everywhere the language of the titular nation has been elevated to the status of state language. It would, however, be wrong to claim that the new states of Eurasia are based exclusively on the ethnic principle. Their new state structures embody elements taken from both the civic and the ethnic model. These two nation concepts seem to be living in uneasy co-habitation.

In ethnic nation-building the symbols and traditions of the state are identified with the symbols and traditions of titular nation. The state authorities try to bring about a maximum correspondence between the ethnic and political nation. The preferred methods are outmigration of the minorities and/or their exclusion from the political decision-making. Two other methods, assimilation and border revisions, which also could lead to greaster cultural homogeneity of the state, are less popular. Few nation-builders will countenance a truncation of state territory as a result of transfers of minority-inhabited regions to neighbouring states. Ethnically oriented nation-builders are also afraid that the assimilation of large minority communities may dilute the purity of their ethnic group. The minorities, they believe, should learn the state language, venerate the traditions and history of the titular nation, but not merge with it.

In a civic nation-building project the authorities will try to secure the political loyalty of all inhabitants without encroaching upon their cultural distinctiveness. Political rights are extended to all inhabitants on an equal footing. Political traditions and symbols common to all ethnic groups are cultivated, or, if necessary, created from scratch. One of the shortcomings of this strategy is the weaker emotive power of supraethnic symbols. They may easily by dismissed as artifacts, which of course in a sense they are. Nevertheless, large population

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[2] Andreas Kappeler, *Russland als Vielvölkerreich*, Munich 1993, H. Beck.
[3] Victor Zaslavsky, 'Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Post-communist Societies', *Dædalus*, CXXI no. 2 (Spring 1992), pp. 97-121.

groups in multiethnic societies may develop a double set of identities: Politically, they are proud of being citizens of this particular state, culturally, they identify strongly with their own ethnic group. Large groups in for instance multiethnic United States have this kind of dual identity.

A final complicating factor in Eurasian nation-building is the lack of ethnic consolidation of the titular nations themselves. In many areas there are strong group loyalties on lower levels, towards the tribe, clan, subethnos, or region, competing with the ethnic identity. Many of the 'nations' of Central Asia are recent constructs of modern ethnographers and Communists politicians, who wanted to create quasi nation-states in the area in order to break down allegiances to such overarching ideologies as pan-Turkism and the Muslim Ummah. Even in such a Western nation as the Ukrainians the process of ethnic consolidation is not yet fully completed. There are strong cultural differences between Galicia in the West and Donbass in the East of the country. In cases when the ethnic consolidation and political nation-building are parallel processes, they often interfere with each other, and may even be collapsed into a single venture of ethnic nation-building.

Below I will compare the nation-building projects in the various Soviet successor states with regard to their respective preconditions, declaratory aims, and the means employed. While there are many common features, there are also important differences. Up to a point these variations are due to demographic, historical and other 'objective' circumstances. Political decisions and other 'subjective' factors, however, also play their part. In some countries the nation builders have been able to follow one and the same strategy more or less consistently, in other places abrupt changes have occurred.[4]

The Baltics.
The Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians are all well consolidated as ethnic groups. (A partial exception is the Latvians; the strong regionalism among Eastern Latgallians is a source of some tension.) This means that the questions of how the nation should be defined revolves around the relationship to the non-titular groups, primarily the Russians and other Russophones who arrived in large numbers in the Soviet period.

The fact that the three Baltic countries were independent states in the interwar period has a strong bearing upon their choice of nation-building strategy today. During perestroika the Balts did not proclaim the independence of new states, but restored the states which had been forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union half a century earlier. In contrast to the twelve other post-Soviet states they do not see themselves as 'Soviet successor states' at all. They do not lay claim to any part of the property or outstanding claims of the former Soviet Union but instead demand reparations for the damage which has been inflicted upon them during the occupation.

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[4] It goes without saying that within the framework of a short article only some principal tendencies may be outlined while many nuances are left out. For more details, see my Paul Kolstoe *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, London/Bloomington, 1995, Chr.Hurst/Indiana University press; Pål Kolstø, 'National Minorities in the Non-Russian Soviet Successor States of the Former Soviet Union', RAND corporation, DRU-565-FF; Karen Dawisha og Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia,* Cambridge, 1994: Cambridge University press; and Roland Dannreuther, *Creating New States in Central Asia*, Adelphi Papers 288, Brassey, London 1994.

The interwar state symbols - flags, anthems, insignia, etc. - are reinstituted and have the strong emotional appeal which state authorities in all countries want to invest in such symbols. This is due not least to the fact that they were outlawed in the Soviet period and during perestroika were used as democratic countersymbols to the detested Soviet emblems.

Table 1
ETHNICITY IN THE SOVIET SUCCESSOR STATES, 1989 IN % OF THE TOTAL POPULATION.

STATE	*titular population*	*largest minority group*	*next largest minority group*
Russia	81.5	Tatars 3.7	Ukrainians 2.9
Estonia	61.5	Russians 30.3	Ukrainians 3.0
Latvia	51.8	Russians 34.0	Belorusian 4.5
Lithuania	79.5	Russians 9.4	Poles 7.0
Belarus	77.8	Russians 13.2	Poles 4.0
Moldova	64.4	Ukrainians 13.8	Russians 13.0
Ukraine	72.7	Russians 22.1	Jews 0.9
Georgia	70.0	Armenians 7.9	Russians 6.3
Armenia	93.3	Azeri 2.5	Kurds 1.7
Azerbaijan	82.6	Russians 5.6	Armenians 5.5
Turkmenistan	71.8	Russians 9.5	Uzbeks 8.8
Tajikistan	62.2	Uzbeks 23.3	Russians 7.6
Uzbekistan	71.2	Russians 8.3	Tajiks 4.6
Kyrgyzstan	52.2	Russians 21.5	Uzbeks 12.9
Kazakhstan	39.6	Russians 37.8	Germans 5.7

Source: *Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia SSSR,* Moscow, 1991

Contemporary Baltic nation-builders do not feel obliged to resurrect the entire interwar heritage. The Latvians have reenacted the prewar constitution, but after three years of bitter strife finally adopted a brand new citizenship law. Estonia has done conversely. A new constitution was enacted in 1992 while the 1938 citizenship law has been reestablished, although with significant amendments. Both countries, however, agree that only citizens of the interwar republic and their descendants belong to the original body politic. All present-day permanent residents who have moved to the country in the Soviet period must apply for citizenship on a par with recent immigrants and fulfil relatively stringent naturalization criteria of for instance proficiency in the state language. Of approximately 600 thousand non-titulars in Estonia and 900 thousand in Latvia, less than a fourth have qualified for automatic citizenship. As a result, the political nation in both countries is a considerably smaller body than the total number of permanent residents.

In Lithuania, the decision to re-enact the interwar republic has not been linked to the citizenship issue and all permanent residents have been granted full political rights. There are primarily two reasons for this. The titular nation's share of the population is considerably larger. Lithuanians do not perceive their ethnic distinctiveness as threatened by alien cultural

impulses to the same degree as many Estonians and Latvians obviously do. Furthermore, the Lithuanian citizenship law was adopted in November 1989, at a time when Lithuanian independence was not yet internationally recognized. Indeed, the adoption of this law was used as a means to achieve such recognition. A restrictive law would have been counterproductive towards that end, since many world leaders and international organizations signalled strong concern for minority protection in the would-be post-Soviet states. In order to avoid this predicament, the citizenship debate in Estonia and Latvia was postponed until after independence.

Officially, the Latvian and Estonian treatment of the citizenship issue is based strictly on constitutional law. Most observers, however, see it as ethnically motivated: the law-makers are concerned not so much with the rights of the pre-war citizens, as with the well-being of the titular nationality. Sometimes distinctions between titulars and non-titulars are explicitly made in official documents. For instance, the March 1992 Latvian language law clearly favors Latvian speakers, much more so than did the previous 1989 law. The legislators justify this as necessary to secure the survival of the ethnic Latvia nation. 'Latvia is the only ethnic territory (sic) in the world inhabited by the Latvian nation'. (Diena, Riga, 24 April 1992) In Estonia, the citizenship law stipulates that the language requirements for citizenship may be waived in the case of ethnic Estonians returning to the homeland of their ancestors. Similar clauses may be found in the naturalization laws of Germany, Greece, etc., but it nevertheless undermines the ostensibly strict legalistic rationale behind the denial of automatic citizenship to Soviet immigrants.

Moldova.
The ethno-political situation in Moldova is unique in one respect: The Moldovans speak a Romanian dialect, and in the interwar period most of present-day Moldova was a Romanian province. For these reasons, Moldova has usually been regarded as a Romanian irredenta, and separate Moldovan nation-building was believed to be utterly quixotic, no less impossible than was East German nation-building. Moldovan nationalism, it was expected, would inevitably lead to demands for Romanian-Moldovan reunification. The ethnic consolidation of the Moldovan group was incomplete, not because it contained any significant subgroups, but because it was itself regarded as a subgroup of another ethnos.

For a while Moldovan perestroika activists seemed to confirm the prognoses of Western experts on nationalism. As soon as Moldovan independence had been achieved in the fall of 1991, the Moldovan Popular Front began to press for unification. To its immense chagrin and surprise it discovered that neither the masses nor the elites took to the idea. President Mircea Snegur, a former apparatchik, now the main Moldovan nation-builder, launched the slogan of 'ethnic Romanianness and political Moldovanness', which caught on. Since the fall of Ceausescu Romania had not been a rose garden, neither in economic nor in political terms. Many old Moldovans also remembered that in the interwar period Bucarest politicians had treated their region as a backwater province and done precious little to make it prosper. In addition, after independence many Moldovan intellectuals who had received prestigious jobs in the new state apparatus realized that in the case of unification their nice titles would disappear again. It is certainly more impressive to be, for instance, director of a Moldovan national bank than to head the local branch of a Romanian national bank. Often rather mundane considerations play their part in nation-building processes.

Finally, the deteriorating relationship with the ethnic minorities discouraged the Moldovans from pursuing the unification project. Non-Moldovans make up almost a third of the total

population and certainly did not look forward to a minority status in Greater Romania together with Hungarians, Gypsies and other beleaguered groups. Partly as a result of such apprehensions the Slav-dominated enclave east of the Dniester river proclaimed independence from Chisinau in September 1990. The area has embarked upon its own, ostensibly supraethnic state-building. In conscious contrast to Moldova, where only Moldovan alias Romanian enjoys status as state language, the Dniester Moldovan Republic has no less than three state languages, Moldovan, Ukrainian and Russian. The latter language, however, clearly dominates official business.[5]

To the West of the Dniester Moldovan national rhetoric underwent a remarkable transformation. As long as the Popular Front held sway in Chisinau, official documents were permeated by a higher degree of ethnic language than perhaps in any other Soviet successor state. The Moldovan declaration of independence on 27 August 1991 was most ambiguous on the issue of reunification vs. Moldovan nation-building, but crystal clear as regards the ethnic definition of the nation. Independence was declared ‘in recognition of the thousand year existence of our people and its uninterrupted statehood within the historical and ethnic boundaries of its national formation’. Similar expressions abounded in law texts and other documents from this period.

In the spring and summer of 1992 a full albeit limited war between Chisinau and the Dniester secessionists was won by the latter with the support of Russian military units stationed in the area. Two years later political rhetoric in Chisinau was changed towards civic, non-ethnic nation-building, and there can be little doubt that the military defeat greatly contributed to this new departure. As a small country deficient in resources, squeezed between mightier neighbours, Moldova has adjusted its policy to the harsh realities. Moldova is today officially no longer a national state of the Moldovans, but a 'multinational state.' The Turkic-speaking Gagauzs in the southern part of the country have been granted territorial autonomy on liberal terms, and similar conciliatory overtures are made also to the East bank secessionists. It will be increasingly difficult for the Dniestrovians to justify their separate state-building project.

Belarus and Ukraine.
A crucial factor in any nation-building project is the cultural distance between the titular group and the numerically largest minorities. A short distance will presumably make it easier to gain acceptance among all groups in society for the same symbols and values. A ranking list of the Soviet successor states along this dimension will put Belarus and Ukraine at the top. In both states the titular nation and the largest minorities are all Eastern Slavs who speak related tongues. Together, they make up close to 95% of the total population. Orthodoxy is the overwhelmingly predominant religion. Thus, one would think, some propitious preconditions for successful nation-building are in place.

However, the looming proximity of Russia, a much stronger East Slav state which has ruled Belarus and Ukraine for centuries, greatly complicates the picture. Historically, the Russians have exerted a strong cultural pressure on their Slav neighbours. In Tsarist and Soviet times the close cultural affinity among the groups facilitated linguistic Russification of important segments of the Ukraine and Belarus populations, not least of the intellectual elites. The dilemma of Belarusian and Ukrainian nation-building today is the need a define a separate identity for its citizens without alienating its large Russians and Russified population groups.

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[5] Pål Kolstø & Andrei Edemsky with Natalya Kalashnikova, 'The Dniester Conflict: Between Irrendentism and Separatism', *Europe-Asia Studies*, I, no. 6 (1993) pp. 973-1000.

Alongside the political process of nation-building a parallel project of ethnic consolidation in the two countries is attempted. Efforts are make to reduce and hopefully overcome the contrasts between the Russophones and the native-speaking members of the titular ethnos. This consolidation process is twofold: On the one hand, a *common* Ukrainian and a common Belorussian identity is sought for, on the other hand, a *separate* identity must be created by differentiation from the Russian one. Thus, while the political project of state-building requires a rapprochement and easing of contrasts to the local Russians and other Russophones, the ethnic consolidation project on the contrary demands the establishment of *maximum contrast* between the titular ethnic group and all things Russian.

Most evidence indicates that the Belorussian nation-building has foundered on these rocks. To be sure, also Belarus has acquired her own state emblem, anthem, stamps, etc., and Belarusians participate in international conferences and sports tournaments under Belarusian flags. However, very few Belorussians have developed any strong sense of Belorusianness, culturally or politically. Belorusian political leaders have not managed, many of them not even tried, to define an independent political course for their country, separate from Moscow's.

In January 1994 the leading Belarusian nationalist Zianon Pazniak in desperate tones warned his fellow countrymen against throwing themselves into the alluring Russian embrace: 'No adequate European Russian nation has ever been formed... This patchwork of a nation does not have any defined national territory... Its dominating consciousness is imperial, not national.' (Narodna gazeta, Minsk, 15-17 January 1994.) This diatribe fell on deaf ears. In May 1995 the populist Belarusian president Lukashenko scored a landslide victory in a referendum on closer rapprochement with Russia and the introduction of Russian as a second state language. Eventually, he hoped, a Russian-Belarusian federation or confederation would be established.

In a comparative perspective the causes behind failed nation-building in an internationally recognized, independent state are just as interesting, if not more so, than the success stories. To some extent, the Belarusian failure reflects the undeveloped nature of Belarusian selfawereness. But world history knows of many cases where the state was established first and the nation shaped afterwards within its bosom. I case in point is the Middle East where identification with the new states created in this century clearly seem to be supplanting cultural Pan-Arabism. Although the Belarusian case clearly needs more study, I do not believe that its outcome was historically predetermined. The rather different fate of modern nation-building in Ukraine, sharing many of the same cultural and historical preconditions as Belarus, should also serve as a warning against oversimplified cultural explanations.

Ukrainian nationalism is incomparably more resilient than Belarusian nationalism. Both the Ukrainian ethnos and the Ukrainian state have clearly come to stay. The boundaries of the ethnic Ukrainian group as well as of the Ukrainian nation in the political sense, however, are still in flux.

Prior to World War II the Ukrainian nation was divided among two or more states: Russia/USSR to the East and the Habsburg monarchy/Poland/Romania to the West. In the face of strong cultural pressures from the Poles, who dominated the region demographically and politically, the Ukrainians in Habsburg Galicia developed a strong sense of ethnic

identity. This identity was not primarily 'Galician' but 'Ukrainian': they felt a strong sense of solidarity with their Eastern brethren of whom they admittedly had scant knowledge.

In the quasi-nation state of the Ukrainian SSR the Galicians managed to withstand Russification in much the same way as they had previously braved Polonization. In Soviet times there was also no major influx of Russian immigrants to the region such as took place into the Baltics. Western Ukraine became a greenhouse of Ukrainianness and Ukrainian nationalism. During and immediately after the perestroika period Galicians dominated political life in Ukraine far out of proportion to their numbers, and secured an unmistakable cultural Ukrainian imprint on the Ukrainian state concept. With more than 11m Russians and 4.5m Ukrainians claiming Russian as their mother tongue in the country, Ukrainian was nevertheless proclaimed as the sole state language. History text-books asserted that the medieval state of Kievian Rus' was a Ukrainian state, plain and simple, not the cradle of Russian statehood, as was taught in Moscow, nor a common East Slav civilization. An ancient Kievian symbol, the trident, was chosen as state emblem. During World War II this symbol had been used by Galician nationalists fighting against Soviet power, and it was less than popular among Eastern Ukrainians who during the same war had fought under Soviet standards.

Nonetheless, the official Ukrainian nation concept is clearly inclusive and civic rather than cultural and exclusive in character. In stark contrast to contemporaneous political rhetoric in neighboring Moldova,
the Ukrainian proclamation of sovereignty in 1990 invested state sovereignty not in the Ukrainian ethnos, but in 'the people of Ukraine'. President Kravchuk declared that the Russians in Ukraine should not be considered as an alien minority. They were no less indigenous than the Ukrainians themselves. (Pravda, 16 July 1991) Admittedly, this generous attitude was not fully reflected in the 1992 Ukrainian law on national minorities which distinguishes sharply between ethnic Ukrainians and the 'minorities'. The civic purport of official Ukrainian nation-building was nevertheless indisputable, and has been reinforced under president Leonid Kuchma after his election in the summer of 1994.

In his inauguration speech Kuchma proposed that Ukrainian should retain its position as the only state language while Russian should be elevated to a status as 'official language'. This proposal arose the ire of Ukrainian nationalists who feared a new wave of creeping Russification. Under the telling headline 'No language - no people: no people, no state', the chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament Committee on Question of Culture and Spirituality, Mykola Kosiv, retorted:

> 'Ukraine is the Fatherland of the Ukrainian people, who have realized their holy right to self-government and created the Ukrainian state in which also some national minorities are living ... The Russian people is living in Russia, while some minor parts of this people are living as national minorities in Ukraine' (Holos Ukrainy, Kiev, 16 September 1994).

Clearly, the battle for the content of 'The Ukrainian nation' is still not over.

Transcaucasia.
The major nationalities in the Asian parts of the former USSR are less ethnically consolidated than their European counterparts. The one clear exception to this rule is the Armenians who

have developed a strong common identity centered around the traumatic memory of the 1915 massacre and allegiance to the Armenio-Gregorian church.

By contrast, the second major Christian people of Transcaucasia, the Georgians, have still not fully coalesced into one homogeneous nation. The various sub-ethnoses - the Kartli, Svans, Mingrelians, etc. - have retained a high degree a separate identity. The bloody civil war of 1992 between the followers of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and the central Tbilisi authorities must be understood against this background. Gamsakhurdia was a Mingrelian and his main power base Mingrelia.

In addition to strong intra-ethnic tensions in Georgia there is even stronger inter-ethnic antagonism. As Andrei Sakharov remarked in 1989 (Ogonek, 1989 no.31), Georgia can be regarded as an empire no less than was the USSR. The point is not that Georgia contains a large number of ethnic groups, which do all Soviet successor states, but in the structure of the relationship between the minorities and the Georgian-dominated centre. The smaller Caucasian people fear Georgian hegemonistic aspirations while the Georgians tend to see a drive for secession behind any initiative for greater local autonomy.

As a legacy of the Communist era Georgia in 1991 contained within herself three autonomous formations -- Ajaria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Only the Ajars (in effect Muslim Georgians), are reconciled to their status in the Georgian state, while both South Ossetia and Abkhazia have been theatres of bloody military clashes. In 1992 Tbilisi abrogated the autonomous status of both these autonomies in an effort to create a unified, centralized Georgian state. In Abkhazia this led to an all-out ethnic civil war.

War is one of the strongest identity producers available. In armed conflicts the We-They contrast, so essential to identity formation, is drawn as with a scalpel. Civil wars reinforce tribal, sub-national identities and are strongly deleterious to nation-building. By contrast, wars between *countries* may have the opposite effect of rallying the entire population around the national leaders against the foreign adversary. Thus, as regards nation-building, the protracted war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in southern Transcaucasia may have rather different outcomes from the many wars on Georgian soil.

However, in Soviet times the largest national minority in Armenia were the Azeris (2.5%) and the second largest community in Azerbaijan were the Armenians (5.5%). These groups could hardly be expected to partake in nation-building projects explicitly directed against their ethnic brethren across the border. This problem disappeared after the huge ethnic de-mixing of 1988-89, in which no less than 150 thousand Azeris left Armenia for their 'ethnic homeland' while just as many Armenians moved in the opposite direction. This indicates that nation-building in both countries is basically ethnic rather than civic, despite the granting of full political rights to the entire populace.

Central Asia.
The traditionally nomadic nations of Central Asia, such as the Turkmens, Kyrgyzs and Kazakhs, are divided into tribes and tribal confederations, while the old sedentary cultures around the southern oases in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have retained strong hierarchally structured clan loyalties. Both kinds of sub-national cleavages in society impede the consolidation of national identities.

The Soviet Communists often allowed one or some local clans or tribes to dominate political life in the various Asian republics, either as an exercise of divide-and-rule, or because they were unable to evict the traditionally dominant groups from the seats of power. In 1993 the rivalry between the favoured and underprivileged clans in Tajikistan erupted into a ferocious civil war in which the ideological banners of 'Communism', 'Islamism' and 'democracy' were but thin fig leaves covering a naked power struggle. Since the war the victors, the Khojent- and Kuliab-based 'communists', have not been willing to share power with the conquered clans, and the embers of warfare are still smouldering.

The complete breakdown of social order in Tajikistan served as an object lesson to the authorities in its neighbor states. In various ways they have acted to prevent similar calamities in their own countries. In Turkmenistan president Niazov has introduced a neo-totalitarian personal dictatorship in which leaders of the various tribes are studiously promoted to high profile posts of token authority. Much of the same recipe is followed also by president Karimov in Uzbekistan.

In ethnic terms the Uzbek nation is a strange mixture of various ethnic layers. The nomadic Shaibanid Uzbek tribes who conquered the region in the early sixteenth century have merged with the autochthonous populations, but not quite. Substantial sub-national identities linger on, although it is not clear to what extent they can be mobilized for political purposes.

At the same time the Uzbeks as a group are numerous and powerful enough to be regarded by the titular nations in neighboring states as the potential hegemon of the region. Fears of Uzbek domination have served as a damper on Central Asian cooperation and integration. In spite of themselves the Uzbeks have contributed to national consolidation in the adjacent states. This seems to be the case in for instance Kyrgyzstan, where common suspicion of Uzbek designs have kept in check strong animosity between Northern and Southern Kyrgyz tribes.

Another factor which boosts the formation of supra-tribal and supra-clannish identities among the Central Asians, is the presence of large European communities in their midst. In Transcaucasia demographic Slav penetration was never strong, but in all Central Asian states Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians form considerable minorities. This is particularly true of the North-Eastern ones, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. During World War II the Slavic settler communities were joined by other Europeans such as Germans and Poles who were deported there for political reasons. In the local popular mind, all of these groups are often indiscriminately lumped together as 'the Russians'. This is done more on the basis of language and culture than on racial criteria. Also Volga-Tatar immigrants and even local Koreans (deported to the area by Stalin in the 1930s) are regularly regarded as members of the 'Russian' group on the basis of their preferred language of communication.

In the 20th century Central Asian societies have been characterized by a marked ethno-social bifurcation. The indigenous culture dominates completely in the countryside while the cities have been formed in the Soviet-style European mould. In 1989 no more than 27% of the inhabitants of the Kyrgyzstani capital were ethnic Kyrgyzs while 65% were Europeans. The figures for the Kazakhstani capital were even more disadvantageous for the titular nation. In this country at large the Kazakhs in 1989 constituted 39.5% and the Russophones 47%.

The Kazakhstani ethno-demographic situation may be compared to the Latvian one. Both countries ought to be described as bicultural rather than multicultural. The vast majority of the

population partake in one of two major linguistic cultures of roughly equal size, the Russophone and the indigenous cultures. The tenor of official nation-building in these two countries, however, is rather different. While in Latvia the Latvian ethnos is regarded as the core and main component of the political Latvian nation, the Kazakhstani president Nazarbaev is strenuously promoting a supraethnic nation concept. In May 1993 he pointed out that

> In the world there are quite a few states, even very prospering ones, in which there are more different nations and nationalities than we have in Kazakhstan. In these countries patriotism is especially strongly developed. A devotional attitude towards the state symbols reigns in society. For instance, at the beginning of the school day, during the swearing in of a jury or an official, and at many other events and mass gatherings the state flag is being flyed and the national anthem is being played. (Sovety Kazakhstana, Almaty, 13 May 1993)

This is civic nation-building in pure form. Obviously, Nazarbaev's prototype is USA. In order to combat ethnic polarization of national politics Nazarbaev has encouraged the creation of of political parties reaching out to all ethnic groups. Only to a limited extent has this strategy been successful. Politics are gradually being monopolized by ethnic Kazakhs. In the parliament which was dissolved in 1995 there were 103 ethnic Kazakh deputies as against 49 Russians. There are no strong reasons to expect that this imbalance will decrease in the next elections.

Politics in Kazakhstan are largely a matter of striking the necessary compromises between the three large Kazakh hordes (*zhuzes*), the Great, Middle and Small horde. For instance, the decision to move the capital from the south to the northern city of Akmola (Tselinograd), away from the stronghold of the Great horde, should probably be seen in this light, rather than as an attempt to move the centre of political decision making closer to the Slav heartland.

To some extent the exclusion of Europeans from influence and control in society is a result of social dynamics outside Nazarbaev's control. However, also on the legislative level a preferential treatment of ethnic Kazakhs and of Kazakh culture is discernible. The Kazakhstani constitution opens up for dual citizenship for ethnic Kazakhs living abroad (many Kazakhs fled to China and Mongolia under Stalin) while dual citizenship is denied to Russians living in Kazakhstan. Also, the Kazakhstani immigration law allows for free return of ethnic Kazakhs from abroad but stipulates quota regulations for other ethnic groups. Particularly galling to the local Russians is the renaming of Slavic towns and streets in Kazakh manner in compactly Slavic areas. Clearly, this runs counter to the professed goal of civic nation-building.

In small mountainous Kyrgyzstan Central Asia's most ambitious experiment in Western-style democracy has been launched. President Akaev allows a degree of press freedom unprecedented in the region but it can be argued that this licence has increased rather than eased ethnic tension in society. In the freewheeling Kyrgyzstani media pluralism even the most rabid nationalists and xenophobes can find a publisher and scare up his neighbors.

There are some similarities between Moldovan and Kyrgyzstani nationalism. In both countries there is a streak of racism and extremism among the very small but aggressive cultural elite. Perhaps we are entitled to see in this some kind of social regularity: the

shrillness of nationalist rhetoric is likely to increase in proportion to the frailty of the national intelligentsia.

President Akaev has had to exert his full authority to avoid the passing of blatantly ethnically biased legislation in the Kyrgyzstani parliament, such as a law stipulating that all Kyrgyzstani land belongs to the Kyrgyz ethnic group. Kyrgyzstani nationalists, however, have not been put in place as have their Moldovan counterparts but still represent a force to be reckoned with. Under Communism the Kyrgyzs were often condescendingly treated by the Slavs as ignorant hill-billies, and
Akaev is heedful of the desires of his ethnic brethren to receive a place in the sun. To a larger extent than the legislation in most Soviet successor states, the Kyrgyzstani constitution gives the ethnic Kyrgyz group a privileged status in the nation-building project. As the preamble states, 'We, the people of Kyrgyzstan, strive to secure the national renaissance of the Kyrgyzs and to defend and develop the interests of the representatives of the other nationalities.' The Europeans ask sarcastically: against whom shall we be defended? Against the Kyrgyzs? If so, who shall protect us? The same Kyrgyzs? (Slavianskie vesti, Bishkek, 1992, no. 2) A growing number of Europeans feel alienated in Kyrgyzstani society and move out at a pace of 5% a year.

Also from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan significant outmigration of Europeans is taking place, indicating that the endeavours to create supraethnic national identities in these states are in dire straits. In none of these states has the titular ethnic group been singled out for special treatment in the constitution or in other legal acts such as has been done in Latvia, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. However, in spite of the political correctness of official rhetoric the titular ethnos is everywhere becoming 'the state-bearing nation' . It increasingly monopolizes political life and fills up most of the prestigious jobs in culture and society. To some degree this tendency reflects the raising educational and modernizational levels of the indigenous Central Asians, but even more it reveals the reemergence of atavistic political patterns of premodern societies. When the clans and tribes have divided among themselves the prestigious jobs and positions, there are few left for the Europeans. As one exasperated Russian in Kyrgyzstan exclaimed: 'Every new boss starts by vacating with all possible means the lucrative jobs [under his authority] to make room for his fellow clansmen. Without the support of his kin he is a nobody, and he will be 'eaten up' by somebody else. Who are suffering under this system? Of course, the "aliens", that is: we, the Russians, since we have nobody high up to defend us. (V. Uleev in Res Publica, Bishkek, 15 May 1993).

In Estonia and Latvia the indigenous ruling elites have tried to engineer the political marginalization of the Slavs by legal means. This strategy may in time become less effective as ever-larger groups of non-citizens are being naturalized and make use of their political rights. For instance, in the 1995 elections the Russian faction in the Estonian parliament Riigikogu increased to six deputies, up from zero in 1992. By contrast, in several Central Asian states, despite some overt high-level attempts to create supraethnic states, the exclusion of Europeans from political power seems to be increasing.

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The breakup of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union after the fall of Communism have provided students of nation-building with an abundance of comparative cases. Not since the decolonization of Africa has the world experienced a similar proliferation of new states in one and the same area. The post-Soviet states have all the necessary

requirements for fruitful comparison: A large number of similarities but also striking differences. This essay should be regarded as a first exploration into an academically rewarding and politically highly important terrain.